

Minutes from the 9.22.10 4FRI Stakeholder Meeting

Previous Minutes: The meeting minutes were approved from 8.25.10

Call to the Public: There were no public comments offered

Report on the Landscape Strategy Economic Report Update (Marcus Selig)

Report from the Landscape Strategy Working Group (LSWG)

An overview of the 4FRI Landscape Strategy was provided to gather feedback from the Stakeholders. Topics discussed included current conditions across the 4FRI Landscape, potential future EIS analysis areas, and treatment area identification and description. See Basecamp for PowerPoint Presentation @ (<https://ffri.basecamphq.com/projects/5011578/files/cat/58255538>). The following comments and information were provided during the presentations:

- The FS highlighted that treatments in remote locations and/or established over a broader landscape will be more expensive, due to an increased distance from industry.
- The 4FRI should use a “triage” approach that sequences treatments by initially targeting areas with a high crown fire risk.
- The 4FRI should identify treatment areas by looking at an entire large scale area before breaking it down into smaller sections.
- The 4FRI should develop treatment strategies that will continue to support wood product businesses in the White Mountains.
- The main variables utilized in the definition of candidate treatment areas were sixth level watersheds and Firescapes. Firescapes provide a unit for modeling fire behavior and are based on terrain, ecology, and infrastructure.
- Ponderosa pine areas considered for mechanical treatment in the first EIS had to fall under at least one of 12 map categories identified by the group. See PowerPoint for specific details.
- It was noted by the FS, that Owl PAC’s can be treated with mechanical equipment.
- Some stakeholders were concerned by the weights (level of importance) placed upon specific variables used to classify treatment areas. For example, there is concern that using the current maps will drive treatments around communities while neglecting key habitat areas. It was suggested that Stakeholders have an in-depth conversation about the values associated with treatment prioritization across the landscape, and to model various distributions and classes of weighting parameters.

- The LSWG assured the Stakeholders that nothing has been finalized as there are many variables that have yet to be considered. Additionally, they have not prioritized specific areas on the landscape, and noted that multiple treatments can occur across the landscape at one time.
- LSWG indicated 6th level watersheds are useful for selecting treatment areas because they provide a starting point to develop proposed actions that are tied to specific pieces of the landscape, while acknowledging that you can't treat all areas the same.
- The facilitator highlighted the importance of developing measurements and tools that are conducive to adaptive management; "Seeking success instead of victory". He also highlighted that maps are to help inform decisions, not make them.
- FS applauded the work that has been done, but reaffirmed that further work was needed. They also indicated they would continue to work with the Stakeholders beyond October 1.
- The group continued to discuss whether weighting variables are based on value-sets. One suggestion to alleviate this concern was assigning active crown fire as the highest weighted variable and all others would receive equal weights. Other distributions of emphasis could also be modeled.

The discussion was finalized based on the following decision points:

- Commitment to a clear transparent process to improve the tool and to develop selection criteria for priorities and sequencing in the L.S. Strategy.
- Two scenarios will be provided to the FS: 1) Crown Fire is assigned a weight of 3 and all other variables are assigned a 1 and, 2); the original model presented by the LSWG on 9/22/10.
- The LSWG will develop a sequencing and prioritization process and criteria by October 1, 2010.
- Edits to Desired Future Conditions document should be submitted to Diane Vosick by 12pm on September 27, 2010.
- The Landscape Strategy will be posted to Basecamp by September 26, 2010 and the deadline for comments is September 28, 2010.

Charter & Governance Issues

Currently, the 4FRI Steering Committee (SC) is governed by one individual for a three-month term. The SC has requested their governance structure to be amended in the Charter to a configuration of co-chairs with staggered six-month terms. Ethan Aumack, Ed Smith and Steve Gatewood have volunteered to be considered for the next co-chairs. However, there is an interest to recruit new volunteers, especially someone from eastern Arizona. A vote to amend the Charter will occur at the next 4FRI meeting.

- A proposal was submitted to have Joe Seidenberg from the Ecological Restoration Institute coordinate 4FRI activities.
- The FS has employees with facilitation training who are available to assist at 4FRI Work Group meetings.
- The Stakeholders decided against 4FRI becoming a Federal Advisory Committee. See previous meeting notes for the discussion on this topic.
- A subcommittee was formed to investigate various options for managing 4FRI fiscal affairs. Volunteers included: Larry Stephenson, Scott Harger, Anne Motek-Lucas, Pascal Berlioux, Marcus Selig, & Steve Gatewood. At the next meeting, the group will provide recommendations both in writing and verbally to the stakeholders.

Forest Service Coordination

The FS provided presentations on the following topics: NEPA strategy and forest integration; Monitoring/adaptive management strategy; Fuels, silviculture, and wildlife strategies for NEPA; and Next steps for moving into the NEPA process. See Basecamp for PowerPoint Presentations @ (<https://ffri.basecamphq.com/projects/4739586/files/cat/56718095>). The following were key points and questions raised during the presentations:

- FS stipulated that stakeholders are an extension of the “id” team.
- FS provided the following dates as a tentative 4FRI timeline: first RFP winter 2010-2011, first contract summer 2011, first task order fall 2011, and identification of the second EIS summer 2011. However, they cannot provide specific details on the 4FRI timeline, and federal law determines that Stakeholders will not be permitted to have conversations with FS contracting officers relative to the overall process.
- The FS hopes partners such as the AZ Game & Fish and U.S. Fish & Wildlife will contribute some funding to help support the cost of effectiveness monitoring.
- FS Chris Knopp informed the group he met with Pascal several weeks ago to discuss strategies for advancing contracting needs.
- Changing the canceling ceiling requirements and extending the legal limits of contracts will require legislation.
- It was suggested to revise the draft (but old) 4FRI strategic plan to ensure key dates/timelines are identified and that a strategy is developed that will solicit industry investment.
- Mary Lata, FS fire ecologist, offered to present more information at a later date on smoke issues (health, visibility, tourism, commerce) and AZDEQ air quality regulations that could impact the implementation forest treatments.

- The FS silviculturalist demonstrated a GIS product that combines data from various sources and models at both site and landscape levels, and from multiple sources.

FS Next Steps for moving into the NEPA Process. Presentation by Paula Cote

- FS will share the purpose and need assessment for treatment across the 4FRI landscape on their website and in several workshops; comments will be accepted from stakeholders and the public.
- FS will share the draft proposed action review on their website and at several workshops; comments will be accepted from stakeholders and the public.
- FS will share the draft EIS on their website; comments will be accepted from stakeholders and the public.
- FS will have a final open comment period prior to issuing a final record of decision.
- FS will have a document (available on their website) outlining how stakeholders and the public can participate and provide feedback on 4FRI.
- A request was submitted to have a meeting on NEPA pitfalls. While a similar discussion has occurred previously (PEIS vs. Landscape Assessment) there are new topics that have yet to be analyzed such as issues to avoid, lesson learned from other large scale NEPA, and how the information can be used for adaptive management. Marcus Selig (GCT) will develop the questions and assist Joe Seidenberg (ERI) in organizing the meeting, and/or distributing relevant documents and information.

Vilsack Letter

- The Stakeholders discussed whether they should pursue legislative action to resolve the “cancellation ceiling” and the 10-year contract limit provisions of Stewardship contracting. It was acknowledged that other groups from around the country have been unsuccessful in resolving these issues through legislative action, to date. The group decided against pursuing legislative action as a group.

Facilitation Services

- FS has asked the Stakeholders to identify and prioritize upcoming facilitation needs in order to develop a budget for the funding that was made available through the CFLRP allocation. However, the FS mentioned it will also need facilitation time for the NEPA public outreach they will initiate. They also encouraged the group to consider developing skills for self-facilitation, as they have “other needs” for the 4FRI facilitator. The Stakeholders have mixed opinions on whether self-facilitation can be done successfully, such as the ability to maintain or be perceived as neutral. The group agreed to have further discussion on this topic.
- At minimum facilitation services will be provided at the monthly Stakeholder meetings.

Working Group Reports

- Science & Monitoring: Monitoring Needs Assessment report will be delivered to the FS by October 1.
- Communications: the bids received for constructing/maintain the 4FRI website were higher than anticipated and beyond the current budget. The group has proposed having a Stakeholder (or employee from a Stakeholder's organization) construct and maintain the website.
- Native American Outreach: No comments other than those discussed at the August meeting, were received on the letter drafted by Anne Mottek-Lucas. She will speak with FS tribal lead and then start contacting tribes individually. Joe Seidenberg (ERI) has volunteered to participate in this working group.

Next Meeting

Oct. 27: White Mountains location TBD.